

the parties to think they face a choice between further progress and the status quo. But in fact, the actual choice is probably between progress and a return to violence, because extremists on both sides still seek to destroy the agreement. Delay and impasse create a vacuum that they will try to fill. We must not let them.

The talks that Prime Ministers Blair and Ahern convened in Belfast last week created an opportunity to restore momentum toward resolving these issues and fully implementing the Good Friday agreement. Keeping the process moving forward will mean compromise, hard work, and trust. Trust is critical to resolving tough issues facing the parties: building a police force that has the respect of all the people; putting arms finally and forever beyond use; achieving a normal security presence throughout the society; making sure the new political institutions are here to stay. Now is the time to act—as Yeats said, “Do not wait to strike till the iron is hot, but make it hot by striking.”

The parties in Northern Ireland, many of whose leaders are represented here today, have shown themselves capable of rising to the occasion and moving forward with wisdom and confidence. And as you do so, know that the United States will be ready to help in any way the governments and the parties find useful.

It’s been said that Ireland is a place where “the inevitable never happens and the unexpected constantly occurs.” Three years ago, the parties unexpectedly gave us the Good Friday agreement. Weeks later, citizens in all parts of the island defied all expectations by voting to approve the agreement in overwhelming numbers. This year on Saint Patrick’s Day, let us all resolve to push for peace, a lasting, real, and needed peace.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President delivered the remarks at approximately noon in the Rayburn Room at the U.S. Capitol. In the prepared text, the President referred to First Minister David Trimble and Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon, Northern Ireland Executive; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland; and former Senator George J. Mitchell, who chaired the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland. This text was released by the

Office of the Press Secretary on March 23. The remarks as delivered were not released. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks Honoring Greek Independence Day

March 23, 2001

Your Eminence, thank you very much, sir. It’s always an honor to be in your presence. I think the last time we were together was at the church service right after I had the honor of being sworn in as the President. And I appreciate so very much you being there.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Niotis, Ambassador Philon, Ambassador Marcoullis, Director Tenet, distinguished guests from Greece, as well as from America, welcome. This is a beautiful room to hold an important ceremony.

I want to thank you all for coming. I particularly want to thank Congressman Mike Bilirakis, as well as Senator Olympia Snowe, who is not with us today. I know where she is since I flew her up to Maine earlier. [Laughter] I want to thank you both for organizing the events. And it’s interesting to note that I have been in your State and her State within the last week. All is well. [Laughter]

When I became President, I inherited the responsibility to safeguard one of America’s oldest and most sacred friendships—that of the Government and people of the United States with the Government and people of Greece. We must keep that relationship vibrant, as it has been for 180 years.

It was 180 years ago that Greece proclaimed its independence—yet another example of Greece’s contribution to the cause of human liberty. Few nations in the history of the world have done more to contribute to democratic self-government.

A Chinese scholar, hoping to foster an appreciation of Western thought in his country, recently translated the works of Homer into Chinese. He mastered ancient Greek in order to produce the most accurate translation possible and explained it this way: “If one wants to understand Western civilization, one has to search back to its roots, and the roots lead to ancient Greece.”

Greek ideals had an enormous influence on the American Founders. James Madison, the Father of the Constitution, wrote this: "Among the confederacies of antiquity, the most considerable was that of the Grecian Republics."

We respect the ancient influence of Greece, and we value its modern friendships. Greece and America have been allies in the great 20th century struggles against nazism, Soviet communism, and Iraqi aggression. Our two nations are bound by history, by trade, by mutual respect, by common ideals, and one of the world's most important alliances.

We in the United States consider Greece to be a friend, a strong ally, and a powerful force for good in the world. And all the world will see this in vivid display when Athens hosts the Olympics of 2004. We're all looking forward to the great event.

I'm very pleased with the strong and expanding relationship between the United States and Greece. Our trade has increased by 16 percent in the last year. Tourism and high level contacts between the United States and Greece have also increased.

I want you to know that the United States stands ready to help Greece and Turkey as they work to improve their relations. I'm also committed to a just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus dispute. My administration fully supports the U.N. Secretary-General's efforts to bring peace and prosperity to all Cypriots. Our goal is an early resumption of the U.N. process.

The greatest gifts of Greece, however, to this country are the immigrants it's sent, men and women who enrich our Nation with their spirit. They're the models of community and enterprise, of family, of education and public service. And we honor Greek independence. And as we honor Greek independence, I also want to honor the Greek contribution to our national character.

So it's my pleasure to welcome you, Your Eminence, our distinguished guests, to this celebration of Greek Independence Day.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:10 p.m. in the the Indian Treaty Room in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Archbishop Demetrios, Primate of

the Greek Orthodox Church in America; Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Grigoris Niotis of Greece; Greek Ambassador to the U.S. Alexandros Philon; Cypriot Ambassador to the U.S. Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis; and United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan

March 23, 2001

President Bush. Good afternoon. It's my honor to welcome the Secretary-General to the Oval Office. My administration thinks he is doing an excellent job as the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and therefore, we heartily endorse his second term as the Secretary-General.

I appreciate your willingness to serve a second term, Mr. Secretary-General, and I'm looking forward to working not only to make sure that you serve a second term, but once that's done, work closely with you to keep the peace and to make the world more prosperous.

So, welcome.

Secretary-General Annan. Thank you very much. Mr. President, I'm also looking forward to working with you. And I'm very happy to be here. We have many issues to work on together, and I'm looking forward to our discussions this afternoon. We will go over a whole range of issues, including HIV/AIDS, poverty, the Balkans and African issues.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Thank you, all. Have a great weekend.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:50 p.m. on the South Grounds at the White House. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Situation in Macedonia

March 23, 2001

The United States joins its allies and the United Nations in strongly condemning the